

HER MOTHER'S SECRET.

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH. Author of "The Hidden Hand," "The Unloved Wife," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

There is a sound within her—"tis a wound That lies too deep for tears; and many a while When all that is around her seems to smile, Within her heart—beating—keels doth sound.

ISAAC WILLIAMS.

"Mother! Oh, mother! it will break my heart!" wailed Odalite, sinking at the lady's feet, and dropping her head into her hands, face downward to the carpet.

The lady gently raised her child, took her in her arms and tenderly caressed her murmuring softly.

"No, my own hearts never break, or one heart, I know, must have broken long ago. Besides," she added, in a firmer tone—"Honor must be saved, though hearts be sacrificed."

"Honor, mother, dear? I do not understand it. I know that honor has to do with it. Or, if it has, I should think that honor would be better saved by my keeping faith with Le than with breaking with him! Oh, mother! mother! it will kill me!" moaned Odalite.

"My child, my dear girl, hear me! Listen to reason! Leonidas Force has no claim to be remembered by you. You have never been engaged to him. You were but a little girl of thirteen when he went to sea on his first voyage three years ago and you have not seen him since. What possible claim can he have upon you, since no betrothal exists between you?" gently questioned the lady, tenderly running her fair fingers through the dark tresses of the young head that leaned upon her bosom.

"Oh, mother," replied the girl, with a heavy sigh, "I know that there was no betrothal between Le and myself—but—but—we all knew, you and father and Le and I—all knew—and always knew that we two belonged to each other and would always belong to each other all our lives. Le and I never thought of any other fate."

"Idle, childish fancies, my poor little girl! too trivial to cause you these tears. Wipe them away, and look clearly at the higher destiny more worthy of your birth and beauty," murmured the lady pressing her ripe, red lips upon the pale brow of her darling.

"Oh, mother, I do not want a higher destiny! I do not want any destiny apart from Le. And these are not childish fancies, and not trivial to me! Oh, think, mother, Le and I were playmates as far back in my life as I can remember. We loved each other better than we loved any one else in the world. You and father used to laugh at us and pretend to be jealous; but we saw that you were pleased all the time; for you both intended us for father and we knew it, too, for father and mother were two: 'So much Le better; I hope their hearts will not be estranged when they grow up!' And our hearts have never become estranged from each other!"

"Oh, yes, dearest, I know that there was some speculative talk when you were children of uniting you and Leonidas, so that the name of Force might not die out from Mondree. But I never really approved of marrying cousins, Odalite, merely to keep the family name in the family estate."

"But, mother, darling, Le and I never thought of the family name and estate; we only thought of one another. And, besides, we are such very, very distant cousins—only fourth or fifth, I think—that that objection could never be raised. Oh, mother! I do not know how to get me to break with Le! I can not! I can not! Oh, indeed, I cannot!" she cried, burying her face in the lady's bosom.

Elfrida Force caressed her daughter in silence.

Presently Odalite lifted her head and pleaded:

"He is coming home so soon now, and so full of hope! He expects to be here by Christmas; and he expects—oh, yes, I know by his last letter that he expects to be here—'tis only a few days off! The compassionate yet scrutinizing gaze of her mother, and her voice faltered into silence.

"To marry you early in the new year, I suppose you mean, dear?"

"Yes, mother."

"He did not say so,"

"No, mother, dear, he did not say so, in so many words, but from the whole tone of his letter he evidently meant so. Father thought he did, and even tried to tease me about the New Year's wedding—asking me how many hundreds I should need to buy my wedding clothes."

"What was it he said in his letter that leads you to suppose he has any such expectations? I confess that I saw nothing of such an intention when I read the letter."

"Only this, mother, but it was very significant. He wrote that he had inherited Greenbushes and all of his Aunt Laura's money, he was rich enough to resign from the navy, and he need not go to sea any more, nor ever part with me again; but that he could stay home, repair his land, and farm it on all the new principles, and make the place a paradise for us to live in. He wrote, mother, dear, as of certain fixed facts."

"He was very presumptuous, my dear little girl, for there is nothing certain in this world of changes," gravely commented the lady.

"But Le's heart has not changed, nor has mine."

"My poor darling!" said Elfrida Force, smoothing her daughter's dark hair with gentle hands, "my precious child! It grieves me to do so, but I must prepare you for what seems inevitable. You must forget all this youthful folly and think of Leonidas Force only as a cousin. You do not really love him as a betrothed man, and should love her betrothed husband. You only fancy that you do. In reality you know nothing of such a love as that. Le was brought up in the house with you. You have no brother. He has no sister, and to marry her as brother as brother and sister. By and by you both may discover—but not for each other—the higher, deeper, stronger love which unites the husband and wife in a true marriage—such a love as I could wish might crown my darling's life with lasting joy—such a love as you might find in a union with Angus Angles, if you would but give him the opportunity of winning your heart."

"Madam!" exclaimed the girl, starting to her feet, and gathered her black brows over black eyes that blazed with indignation. "I love my betrothed! I love him and I love him! And I would rather die this day and never behold the face of Le again, than listen to Colonel Angles!"

"Odalite! Odalite, my child! You are talking to your mother. Come to my heart again, and calm your excitement," said the lady holding out her arms.

And the young girl fell weeping upon the bosom of her mother.

The lady allowed some time to pass in which the girl's paroxysm of tears exhausted itself, and then soothing her gently, she began in a soothing tone:

"My precious child, do you doubt your mother's love or truth?"

"Oh, no, no, no! How could you ask such a question of your own child, mother?" earnestly answered Odalite.

"Do you doubt that duty is to be held above all other considerations?"

"No! Oh, no!"

"Well, then, I have something to tell you, my darling, which will make you forget all selfish aims, and even wish wishes of your old playmate. Come with me to your own bed-chamber, where we

shall be most secure from all interruption. I will tell you of a fatal episode in my own youth, when I was younger even than you are now. Oh, that I should have to tell such tales to my daughter! But, Odalite, when you have heard it you will learn just what you have to do in order to save us all, and especially to save your noble, generous, honorable father from ruin and disgrace. And then, Odalite, do exactly as you please. Her shall it be, when you have learned all you shall be, and not another word of persuasion will I utter. I will leave our fate in your hands, and you shall be absolutely free to act. Come with me now."

She took her daughter's arm and they arose.

For a moment they stood, quite accidentally, facing a tall mirror between two windows on the opposite side of the room, and that mirror for the moment reflected two beautiful forms, of which it would be difficult to decide which should bear off the palm for beauty.

The elder lady, Elfrida Force—wife of Abel Force, the owner of Mondree, one of the finest old places on the western shore of Maryland—was a tall, stately blonde, with a superbly rounded form, a rich complexion, and an abundance of golden brown hair, rippling all over her fine head and gathered into a mass at the nape of her graceful neck. She wore an inexpensive, closely fitting dress of dark blue serge, whose very plainness set off the brilliancy of her complexion, showing to the best advantage that splendid beauty, which at the age of thirty-five had reached its zenith. Just now, however, the vivid brightness of her bloom had faded to a pale rose tint, and her lovely blue eyes seemed heavy with unshed tears.

Her young daughter, Odalite, equally beautiful in her way, was yet of an entirely opposite type. She was of medium height, and her form, though well rounded, was slender almost to fragility. Her hair was small, and covered with a fine suit of rippling jet black hair, which she wore carelessly, partly in a black net, partly escaping down the shoulders. Her eyes and eyebrows were black as jet; her features were delicate and regular; and her complexion was of a clear ivory white. She wore a simple, plain dress, plainly made, closely fitting, and relieved only by narrow white ruffles at throat and wrists.

Only for a moment they paused, and then they walked out of the room, and the pretty picture disappeared.

It was in a chamber, where, in privacy, the proud lady could tell the daughter HER MOTHER'S SECRET—a secret so terrible that she believed it would compel the poor girl to give up her young dream of happiness with her chosen lover, Leonidas Force, whom she idolized, and accept of a life of misery as the wife of Colonel Angus Angles, a heartless adventurer, whom she loathed. The above we publish as a specimen chapter; but the continuation of this story will be found only in the N. Y. Ledger. Ask for the number dated November 1st, which does not lead to any office or book-store. If you are not within reach of a news office, you can have the Ledger mailed to you for one year by sending three dollars to Robert Bonner, publisher, 182 William street, New York.

There is hardly an adult person living but is sometimes troubled with kidney difficulty, which is the most prolific and dangerous cause of all ailments. It is a sort of need to have any form of kidney or urinary trouble. It is a sort of need to have any form of kidney or urinary trouble. It is a sort of need to have any form of kidney or urinary trouble.

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Our exhibit in the Trades Procession of the Bi-Centennial Celebration on October 25th will illustrate the great stock of men's and boys' clothing now ready in Oak Hall. Our preparations for the trade of this Autumn and Winter already reach

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Do not fail to visit Oak Hall. Look at the Clothing and Piece Goods, go through the workrooms and see how the vast place goes on. We have a hearty welcome for all, whether buyers or visitors. The tens of thousands of friends we have made in the country about Philadelphia during the last twenty-two years are, we are sure, more firmly our friends than ever before. We have gained their confidence by giving them the best dollar's worth of clothing to be had anywhere, and we offer a new pledge of fidelity in our low prices and elegant Autumn stock of this year's sales.

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There is but one "Skin Cure" which can be relied on, and that is Dr. Benson's, and its name is an earnest of its worth. It is not a patent medicine, but the result of his own experience and practice, and is a sure cure for all special diseases for which it is offered. It makes the skin soft and white and smooth, removing tan and freckles, and is the best toilet preparation in the world. It is elegantly put up in two bottles in one package, containing both internal and external treatment. Simple in its combination, pure and free from all poisons, it may be relied upon by all those who wish to have their complexion clear and bright.

It is sold by all druggists, and is a sure cure for all skin diseases of whatever nature, whether they are Eczema, Tetter, Humors, Inflammations, Milk Crust, Rough Scap, Scrofula, Ulcers, Pimples or Tender Itchings on any part of the body. Price, One Dollar per package. All druggists have it for sale.

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C. N. Crittendon, of New York, is a wholesale agent for Dr. C. W. Benson's remedies.

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No other disease is so prevalent in this country as Constipation, and no remedy has ever equalled the celebrated Kidney-Wort as a cure. Whatever the cause, however obstinate the case, this remedy will overcome it. Acts at the same time on Kidneys, Liver and Bowels.

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SPANISH LACE LACES. COLORED SILK SPANISH LACE. WHITE IRISH POINT TRIMMING for Collars and Cuffs.

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In Beaver, Diagonal and Silk, neatly trimmed with Fur and Fascinators at lowest city prices. Light and Dark Cloth Jackets, Light and Dark Cloth Coats.

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